

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

ART OR AGR: DECIPHERING WHICH RESERVE PROGRAM
IS BEST SUITED FOR TODAY'S TOTAL FORCE STRUCTURE

by

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Abstract

Over the last two decades, the Air Force Reserve (AFR) has seen a shift in how it supports the United States. As a result of budget constraints and manning cuts, the Air Force (AF) has decided to move forward with more integrated component workforces. In merging Active Duty (AD) and AFR components, it is important for commanders and Airmen to be able to seamlessly work, manage, and be treated equally, in order to accomplish the mission. This paper analyzed the AFR full-time workforce, which are the ART and AGR programs, by comparing each and highlighting the differences, advantages and disadvantages they present to commanders and Airmen who work in a mixed component environment. Some of the differences and disadvantages in the ART program present challenges and issues that can affect the mission, budget, manning, and morale of a unit. These same challenges and issues were not identified with the AGR program, and overall, this program appears to be better suited for today's Total Force initiatives. As a result, the AFRs must consider replacing ARTs with AGRs in a mixed component workforce.

Introduction

The Air Force (AF) has been engaged in combat operations in overseas locations for over two decades and will more than likely continue these types of operations in the foreseeable future. In order to maintain high operations tempo when dealing with an ever shrinking budget, the Active Duty (AD) component of the AF has relied more and more on the Air National Guard (ANG) and Air Force Reserve (AFR) components for manpower and mission support. This reliance has not only saved the AF money, but has illustrated that AD, ANG, and AFR components can successfully work together. The Secretary of the Air Force (SECAF), Deborah Lee James, stated “The ANG and AFR provide the nation a vital capability that is functionally integrated and operationally indistinguishable from the active force.”¹ Not only have the ANG and AFR performed at such a level that is “indistinguishable” from their AD counterparts, but each have successfully operated and deployed with AD squadrons. This ability to seamlessly integrate with the AD has resulted in the AF’s pursuit to create a more integrated Total Force (TF) service by merging AD, ANG, and AFR components together to form mixed component squadrons or sites.

Commanders and Airmen, however, face a number of challenges when working in a mixed environment. Depending on which AFR full-time workforce is being utilized, Air Reserve Technicians (ARTs) or Active Guard Reserves (AGRs), AD leaders and Airmen could be limited in how they manage and treat their mix component workforce, which in turn could have a negative impact on the mission, manning, and morale of the unit. This is why it is important to understand the benefits, advantages, disadvantages and limitations from the ART

¹ Debora Lee James. (10 Sep 2015) ”Secretary of AF: Shift in Culture Through Total Force Integration”. Obtained from the National Guard Association United States Organization website on 30 Dec 2015. Available at: www.ngaus.org/blog/15/09/secretary-af-shift-culture-through-total-force-integration

and AGR programs and determine which is best suited for commanders and Airmen working in a mixed component environment.

This paper examines the AFR full-time reserve workforce. By comparing the ART and AGR programs, outlining the differences, advantages, disadvantages, and limitations with each, this paper will identify aspects of the ART program that can negatively impact the overall mission, manning, and morale of an integrated component environment. The AGR program enables AFR Airmen to be treated to equal to AD Airmen in regards to rank, pay, benefits, and military status, which is why it is better suited for commanders and Airmen working in a mixed component workforce.

Background and Significance

In 2013, the AF created the Total Force Task Force (TF2) that was charged with providing guidance on how to bring the AD, ANG, and AFR components back together and create a more integrated AF. After a year of developing plans, the TF2 briefed the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF), General Mark Welsh, its recommendations for how the AF should move forward as an integrated service.² As a result, General Welsh stood up the Total Force Continuum (TFC), which is a permanent office that is currently carrying out the recommendations made from the TF2.³ One recommendation being tested at a few installations that have AD, ANG, or AFR components which are co-located, is the Integrated Personnel Management Initiative (IPM-I).

² Aaron Mehta (16 Jan 2014). "USAF Creates Office to Guide Integration of Active, Reserve Units". Obtained from the Defense News website on 28 Sep 2015. Available at: <http://www.defensenews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2014301160039>

³ Aaron Mehta. (29 Aug 2014) "Concern Over Speed of Air Force Process". Obtained from Defense News Website on 28 Sep 2015). Available at: <http://archive.defensenews.com/article/20140829/DEFREG02/308290034/>

The concept behind the IPM-I is to merge together AD, ANG, and/or AFR Force Support Squadrons (FSSs) that are on one AF installations, creating a Total Force Support Site (TFSS). These TFSSs are comprised of AD, ANG, or AFR FSS personnel, who are co-locate in one squadron and trained to service military members from any service component, dependents and retirees.⁴ For example, if an AD Airman was seeking assistance with his or her reenlistment, and the AD FSS subject matter expert was unavailable, the AFR FSS expert could step in and seamlessly service the customer. While the concept appears to be simple and conducive to the AF's integrated TF ideals, the underlying issue boils down to inequality and standardization amongst the AD and full-time reserve workforce.

Purpose and Methodology of the Research

The purpose of this research is to identify and analyze the differences each AFR full-time workforce program has to offer commanders and Airmen that are working in a mixed component environment. The reason to decipher which program is better suited for today's fast paced, high operations tempo, and TF environment is in order to allow commanders to manage, discipline, and govern over their workforce in an equal, non-convoluted manner. In order to assist in reaching a conclusion, I will utilize the evaluation framework to compare the ART and AGR programs. The reason I am using this type of framework is because I will be assigning value to the each program, appraising each, and examining the differences between the two programs in order to identify which is best suited when integrating AD and AFR components together to form mixed squadrons or sites. Once a determination is made this paper will present a recommendation for the AFR to restructure the full-time reserve workforce, as the AF moves

⁴ IPM-I Total Force Working Group (2 Dec 2015). "Integrated Personnel Management Frequently Asked Questions." Obtained on 22 Jan 2016 from AFRC/A1R.

forward with plans to merge AD and AFR components together when forming mixed component squadrons or sites.

Background

As the AF moves forward with such initiatives like the TFSS, and continues to merge AD, ANG, and AFR components together to form mixed component workforces, it is important to clearly identify the challenges and limitations that each AFR full-time workforce program may present to commanders and Airmen. These challenges and limitations come in the form of rules, regulations, and laws that guide and govern the full-time reserve workforce. In the AFR, the full-time reserve workforce are ARTs and AGRs. ARTs are unique as they are both full-time civilian employees and part-time Traditional Reservists (TRs) who, while in civilian status, are governed by union, labor laws, and Title 5 of the United States Code (USC). AGRs are full-time reservists working under Title 10 orders, meaning they are essentially AD Airmen who are governed by the same military law, rules, and regulations as regular AD military. Both programs present advantages and disadvantages for commanders and Airmen operating in an integrated TF environment, but one program is better suited for today's mixed component structure.

According to AFR Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 manpower statistics, there were 10,429 ARTs and 2,911 AGRs employed within the Air Force Reserve Command.⁵ ARTs provide stable, continuous, full-time management, administration, and training of the Selected Reserve.⁶ AGRs prepare and administer policies and regulations, and assist in organizing, administering, recruiting, instructing, training or supporting the AFR.⁷ While the duties performed are similar,

⁵ Secretary of the Air Force, (SAF/AAIM). 2014. *2014 United States Air Force Reserve Handbook*. Washington, DC: Air Force Multimedia, Pentagon, 55.

⁶ Air Force Instruction (AFI), 36-2131. 2012. "Air Reserve Technician (ART) Program." Vol. I. United States Air Force, March 20, 2.

⁷ Air Force Instruction (AFI), 36-2131. 2014. "Active Guard/Reserve (AGR) Program." Vol. II. United States Air Force, February 10, 4.

it is the difference between these two programs can create limitations, confusion, and difficulties for commanders and Airmen, and/or put additional strain on an already stringent budget.

ART Program

In 1958, the ART program was established and designed to provide the AFR with a more stable and continuous full-time support system that would manage, support, and train the Selected Reserve.⁸ They serve as the backbone to AFR units, maintaining the unit's readiness, supporting requirements, and executing the day-to-day operations. The role and purpose of the ART program has not change since its inception, and as of FY14, ARTs comprised 78% of the AFR full-time workforce.⁹

The ART program is unique as members are full-time federal civil service employees, assigned to an Air Force Reserve unit, and also required to occupy an equivalent Reserve military position with a comparable military rank.¹⁰ This means ARTs are both federal employees and TRs. During the normal five-day workweek, ARTs perform as civilians and occupy a civilian pay grade position. As such, they do not fall under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), do not legally hold military rank, are protected by union or labor laws, and are governed by Title 5 USC. However, when serving in a military status the same rules, regulations, and policies that govern military members now applies.

Due to their dual status, ARTs are offered benefits for both federally employed civilians and AFR military. In a civilian status, ARTs are entitled to and earn leave which is charged per hour. ARTs garner four hours of regular and sick leave every two weeks, which equates to two

⁸ Cantwell, Gerald T. 1997. *Citizen Airman A History of the Air Force Reserve*. Air Force History and Museums Program. 158.

⁹ Secretary of the Air Force, (SAF/AAIM). 2014. *2014 United States Air Force Reserve Handbook*. Washington, DC: Air Force Multimedia, Pentagon, 55.

¹⁰ Air Force Personnel Center, (AFPC). 2015. "General Information for Air Reserve Technician (ART) Positions." *afciviliancareers.com*. January 27.

days of earned leave per month. The laws governing civilian employees mandates that when a civilian is absent from their prescribed place of duty, they must take leave.¹¹ ARTs are also allocated 120 hours of military leave per year, in order to perform military duties.¹² If serving on military orders, ARTs can earn two and a half days of military leave every 30 consecutive days. So if an ART were to be on orders of 120 days, they will earn a total of 10 days of leave.

Some other benefits available to ARTs are Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB), long-term care insurance, Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI), Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) or injury compensation, Aviator Continuation Pay, education and training opportunities, commissary and base exchange privileges, free immunizations, the Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve, Tuition Assistance, and Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA).¹³

AGR Program

AGRs are reservist members that have volunteered to serve on extended active duty orders. The role of the AGR program is similar to the ART program as they prepare and administer policies and regulations, and assist in the organization, administration, recruitment, instruction, training and supporting the AFR.¹⁴ They are under Title 10 orders, meaning they are essentially like AD military members and receive the same benefits as AD members. AGRs can be promoted if they are the sole occupant of a higher-grade position, attend formal training, developmental education, and skills training.¹⁵ Additionally, AGRs are entitled to Aviator Continuation Pay, Enlistment Bonuses, Medical Officer Special Pay, Special Duty Assignment

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Air Force Personnel Center, (AFPC). 2015. "General Information for Air Reserve Technician (ART) Positions." *afciviliancareers.com*. January 27.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Air Force Instruction (AFI), 36-2131. 2014. "Active Guard/Reserve (AGR) Program." Vol. II. United States Air Force, February 10. 4.

¹⁵ Ibid. 22.

Pay, Military Retirement Reform Act of 1986/Career Status Bonus, Montgomery GI Bill, Tuition Assistance, full medical and dental coverage, Servicemember's Group Life Insurance (SGLI), and USERRA.¹⁶

Not only do AGRs receive the same benefits and entitlements as AD members, but they are also governed by the same policies, instructions, and regulations as AD. Failure to abide by these policies and regulations can result in the AGR member being punished under UCMJ. The distinct difference between AGRs and AD members is that AGRs are still reservists and belong to the Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC).

Problems and Issues

Equality and Standardization

An AD and AFR mixed component environment inadvertently creates a lack equality and standardization amongst the AD Airmen and ARTs. These are in the form of grade or rank, rules or policies, pay and benefits. An AD Master Sergeant, or E-7, is always in a military status and governed under the laws of UCMJ. They receive full medical benefits, Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), Basic Allowance for Substantives (BAS), and have a set annual salary. An ART who is a General Schedule (GS) in the grade of nine (GS-09), works most of the time in a civilian status and is governed under Title 5 USC; however, even though ARTs perform their daily duties as a civilian, they are required to wear the military uniform. So, if there was a GS-09 ART who held the military rank of Master Sergeant, and worked side-by-side with an AD Master Sergeant, one would think they were equal in rank and essentially the same. This seems like a fair assumption because they both wear the same uniform, perform the same duties, and work similar hours. Unfortunately, this assumption is wrong. Due to the difference in AD and

¹⁶ Air Force Instruction (AFI), 36-2131. 2014. "Active Guard/Reserve (AGR) Program." Vol. II. United States Air Force, February 10. 26-27.

ART employee's status, they do not have the same laws governing them, do not receive the same benefits, or the same pay. These differences result in a lack of equal treatment, benefits, and pay, which in turn creates a lack of standardization in how commanders hire, discipline, and manage their workforce in a mixed component environment. These differences can also lead to feelings of resentment, anger, and unimportance.

In order to create an equal and standard environment for the AFR full-time workforce, the status of the reservists should match that of their AD counterparts. By maintaining equality in rank, status, pay, benefits, disciplinary and administrative actions, the Airmen workforce will become a more manageable and less restrictive for leaders. This in turn will lessen feelings of resentment and inequality amongst the AD and AFR personnel. Creating an equal military status employee workforce is more advantageous, efficient, cost effective, and will enable equality amongst the Airmen, which leads to a more cohesive and trusting partnership between AD and AFR Airmen.

Over the years, the AF has worked to enlighten and enforce equal employment opportunities to all Airmen, civilians, and leaders. The AF's equal opportunity policy states the AF will provide equitable treatment and employment which in turn will enhance unit cohesiveness, military readiness, and mission accomplishment.¹⁷ While the AF policy is designed to prevent bias or unequal employment opportunities, it also should address equal treatment base on not only race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, but also the employee's status, be it military or civilian. Employees in a military status are not equal to civilians, and employees in a civilian status are not equal to military. In discussing equality amongst a mixed component workforce, there are certain rules, laws, and policies that hinder

¹⁷ Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD), 36-27. 2012. "Equal Opportunity (EO)." United States Air Force, April 9. 2.

equal treatment when comparing ARTs to AGRs and AD Airmen. ARTs are in a civilian status under the GS classification and pay system during the normal work week. When in military status, they hold military rank that is equivalent to their GS grade. For example, a GS-09 is equivalent to a Master Sergeant in the AF. When in civilian status ARTs are in a GS pay grade, and when in a military status, ARTs hold military rank and are paid based on the military rank they hold. However, here is where it gets confusing and equality comes into play. In 2007, the AF changed policy and instructions stating ARTs will wear the military uniform while performing duties in civil service status.¹⁸ In an interview, Lieutenant General John A. Bradley stated the reason behind the change was AFRC wanted ARTs to wear the uniform because the AF was becoming more integrated, merging AD and Reserve components together. He believed wearing the military uniform was an important step in being a full partner and an unrivaled Wingman.¹⁹ However, there are some that did not share the same thoughts on the matter, as requiring a civilian to wear a military uniform violated civil employee rights.

An independent arbitrator ruled that Whiteman Air Force Base violated its contract with American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Local 2361 by unilaterally requiring ARTs to wear military uniforms while in civilian status.²⁰ The arbitration stated the wear of uniforms might improve a consistent appearance, and cohesion and other long-term military goals, it can also generate lower short-term morale and predicate consequential military behavior on a civilian workforce.²¹ The underlying message from the lawsuit was that ARTs are federal civil employees and should not be required to wear the military uniform if they are not in a

¹⁸ Air Force Instruction (AFI), 36-2903. 2011. "Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel." United States Air Force, July 18. 165.

¹⁹ Robins Air Force Base, GA. 2007. "Air Force Reserve Changes Rule to Require Technicians to Wear Uniforms Fulltime." *af.mil*. August 8.

²⁰ Erling, Christina. 2008. "Arbitrator Says Air Reserve Technicians Don't Need Uniforms." *AFGE.org*. June 10.

²¹ *Ibid*.

military status. It not only creates confusion for those working with ARTs, but also for those being serviced by the ARTs. Additionally, the AF instruction which governs dress and appearance implements Title 10 USC, Chapter 45, The Uniform, Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1334.1, Wearing of the Uniform, and Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 36-29, Military Standards.²² It states failure to observe prohibitions and mandatory provisions of this instruction by military personnel is a violation of Article 92, UCMJ. Violations may result in administrative disciplinary action without regard to otherwise applicable criminal or civil sanctions for violations of related laws.²³ Unfortunately, the logic behind this is flawed. If ARTs are in a civilian status, they do not fall under Title 10 USC and commanders cannot legally punish them under Article 92, UCMJ. Requiring ARTs to wear the military uniform while in a civilian status is not only confusing, but it is a misrepresentation of the ART workforce. They are not military, they do not receive military benefits, they do not abide by the same laws, rules, or policies as military and they cannot be disciplined or punished in the same manner as military members. Finally, while they wear the same uniform as their AD counterparts, they are not the same, nor are they treated the same.

The same cannot be said for AGRs, as they fall under USC Title 10, and are serving on extended active duty orders. AGRs are held to the same standards, rules, and policies as AF AD members. They hold military rank, receive military benefits, and are paid just like their AD counterparts. They are treated the same, managed the same, and disciplined under the same laws governing military members, which alleviates confusion for commanders, Airmen, and customers who may be working with or receiving service from AGRs. In an integrated and

²² Air Force Instruction (AFI), 36-2903. 2011. "Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel." United States Air Force, July 18. 1.

²³ Ibid.

mixed component workforce, having the ability to operate under the same rules, laws, and governing construct enables commanders the freedom to equally manage their workforce. The laws that govern each program play a significant role in how commanders and supervisors manage, discipline, and remove members from full-time AFR positions.

Hiring Process

Both the ART and AGR programs have distinct differences between them that prove challenging in a mix component workforce. In order for an ART to be hired into a vacant position, the process can become lengthy and at times tedious. When an ART position is competitively advertised, there are multiple steps that the hiring official, Civilian Personnel Section (CPS), Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC), and the applicant must go through in order to fill a vacancy. Commanders initiate the hiring process by submitting a request to the local servicing CPS. The CPS reviews the position description and duties, validates the position, ensures the position is unencumbered, and then submits a request for personnel action (RPA) to AFPC. AFPC reviews the RPA for the position, which can take anywhere from 30 days or longer, validates it, and uploads the advertisement to the USA Jobs.gov website, which is managed by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).²⁴ As soon as a position is announced on the USA Jobs website, applicants are able to submit their resume and supporting documents online. When the announcement closes, AFPC receives all applications, reviews them, certifies only those meeting the hiring criteria, and includes the qualified applicants to a certification list. AFPC posts the certified applicants and an automated message is sent to the hiring official who typically has 10 days to make a selection.²⁵ Once the selection is made, AFPC conducts a very

²⁴ Hernandez, Esmeralda, interview by Kristi R. Contardo, 2016. *Civilian Employment* (February 4).

²⁵ Office of Personnel Management, (OPM). *Certificate for Vacancy Available for Viewing*. September 25, 2015.

thorough check to verify the selected applicant is fully qualified for the position. While AFPC is conducting a final check, the CPS coordinates with the Military Personnel Section (MPS) to ensure the applicant meets all military requirements and is military qualified to sit in the TR side of the ART position. Once the applicant has cleared both the civilian and military qualification checks, AFPC will notify the member who will either accept or deny the job offer.²⁶

While this process seems straightforward and simple, it is not. The average time it takes to advertise, hire and gain an ART can take anywhere from six months to over a year.²⁷ Some reasons for delays are due to hiring freezes, manning shortfalls at AFPC, or when a hiring official does not select an applicant from the certified list. A hiring freeze stops all hiring of jobs that are not deemed mission critical. Manning shortfalls at AFPC slows the RPA review, job announcement and qualification checks of applicants. Lastly, if a hiring official does not select an applicant from the certified list posted, AFPC can enforce a 90-day hold on the position before it can be re-advertised.²⁸ Additionally, when multiple agencies are involved in reviewing, validating, and processing of applications, delays or mistakes can occur. However, the AGR hiring process has less agencies involved and less steps, which leads to a more streamlined process for commanders.

Similar to ARTs, AGRs are hired into positions with a specific job description and duties, which are vetting through AFRC for review. To initiate advertisement for an AGR position, Commanders submit a request to Air Reserve Personnel Center (ARPC), who ensures the position is valid, vacant and funded. AFRC completes their review and announces the position on the Reserve Management Vacancy System (RMVS) or Air Force Personnel System

²⁶ Air Force Manual (AFMAN), 36-203. 2002. "Staffing Civilian Positions." United States Air Force, December 12. Chapter 2.

²⁷ Hernandez, Esmeralda, interview by Kristi R. Contardo. 2016. *Civilian Employment* (February 4).

²⁸ Ibid.

(AFPERS).²⁹ Once the announcement is posted, Reservists who are interested apply online by submitting per the directions posted in the announcement. Following the closeout date, ARPC screens each applicant, validates the ones who are qualified, and forwards qualified applicants to the hiring official. The hiring official selects the applicant who they deem most qualified for the position. As soon as the hiring official submits their choice, ARPC will notify the individual of their selection for the position. Once the individual accepts, ARPC initiates the assignment and activation orders, with a tour length of four years.³⁰ If for some reason the hiring official does not make a selection, they have the option of reposting the advertisement without delay. This differs from the civilian hiring process as hiring officials are penalized for not selecting, and must wait before they are allowed to re-advertise a position. The average length of time it takes to advertise and hire into an AGR position will vary as it depends on the hiring official and their timeline; however, the average length of time ranges from 30-90 days.³¹

Clearly, the AGR process is more efficient and expedient than the ART hiring process. The AGR hiring process is more user friendly to the hiring official and applicant, and takes less time to advertise, hire, and fill a vacancy than it does with the ART program. The AGR process prevents prolonged vacancies which can create an increased workload on others, or potential mission delays due to manning shortfalls. In addition to the hiring process, the steps to remove an ART or AGR greatly differ, as the laws for each program affects what actions a commander must take prior to and during the process.

²⁹ Air Force Instruction (AFI), 36-2131. 2014. "Active Guard/Reserve (AGR) Program." Vol. II. United States Air Force, February 10. 11.

³⁰ Air Force Instruction (AFI), 36-2131. 2014. "Active Guard/Reserve (AGR) Program." Vol. II. United States Air Force, February 10. 11.

³¹ Motta, Lawrence E. III, interview by Kristi R. Contardo. 2016. *AGR Hiring* (February 22)

Removal Process

There are various administrative actions a commander or supervisor can execute when rehabilitating or correcting the performance or conduct on an ART or AGR; however if a commander deems it is appropriate to remove or fire an employee, the impact can have a positive and/or negative affect. If a commander has an employee who is not performing his or her duties, causing delays to the mission, causing safety issues as a result of their poor performance, or has a negative impact to morale, removing them could potentially increase the overall health, productivity, and morale of the unit. However, the impact can also have a revers effect on an organization. For example, if a unit is already dealing with manning, morale, and increased workload issues, removing a full-time employee can create a larger manpower problem, which leads to a greater increase in workload. Since the process to hire into an ART position is very long and drawn out, this extended void can result in a more stressful environment for those remaining in the unit.

The steps to remove an AGR, or curtail an AGR's orders are fairly simple and straightforward. Commanders considering involuntary curtailment are first encouraged to use all quality force tools available prior to initiating involuntary curtailment.³² If a commander elects to pursue curtailment action, he or she must notify the member who is given 15 days to respond or submit a rebuttal. After a legal review is done, commanders will forward the package to AFRC for coordination, prior to submitting to the appropriate approval authority. Once coordinate by AFRC, the commander will forward their recommendation along with all supporting documentation to the appropriate approval authority (Group, Wing, Numbered Air

³² Air Force Instruction (AFI), 36-2131. 2014. "Active Guard/Reserve (AGR) Program." Vol. II. United States Air Force, February 10. 18.

Force, and AFRC).³³ The last stop is at ARPC, who reviews, processes, and completes curtailment actions. On average it takes 30-60 days to approve and process a curtailment package; however, AGRs are given a minimum of 120 days before they are released from their current position.³⁴ Overall, the curtailment process is simple, efficient, and effective as it mitigates delays in removing personnel from an AGR position. This in turn allows commanders to advertise the newly vacant position quickly, which alleviates manning shortfalls, or increased workloads due to prolonged vacancies.

As with the AGRs, the steps and overall process to remove or fire an ART is straightforward; however, where commanders face challenges is in how long it takes to build enough supporting documentation to justify removal of a civilian employee, and the length of time it takes to process each removal package. In order to remove a civilian employee, steps must have been taken to try and correct or rehabilitate the employee. If the action to remove is based on failure to perform one's assigned duties, the commander must first initiated a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), and include it in the Supervisor's Employee Work folder. This folder must also contain any corrective actions taken such as letters of counseling, reprimand, or other documentation.³⁵ If it is decided that the PIP has failed to correct or improve the employee's performance, commanders may then initiate actions to remove the ART, if it serves in the best interest of the service and unit. Commanders must coordinate through their local CPS, base legal, and the FSS when initiating removal actions. Once removal is reviewed and substantiated by CPS and base legal, commanders are required to give their employees written notice at least 30 days in advance, and allow ample time for the employee to provide a

³³ Ibid, 19.

³⁴ Motta, Lawrence E. III, interview by Kristi R. Contardo. 2016. *AGR Hiring* (February 22).

³⁵ Comstock, Donald G. 2009. "Supervisors Guide to Civilian Personnel Issues." Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: 42d Force Support Squadron, Civilian Personnel, July. 25, 37.

response and furnish supporting documents that could be used to dispute the removal action.³⁶

When the established termination date is reached the employee is released and the ART position becomes vacant. Unfortunately, if an ART elects to appeal the removal, the position cannot be advertised or filled until a judge renders a final decision on the matter. This process can take anywhere from 90 days or longer.³⁷

Since ARTs are also military, commanders must take into consideration what to do with the member once removed from the ART position. Commanders can elect to keep the employee on their books in a TR position, move them to the Inactive Ready Reserve, or separate the member from the AFR. Regardless of what action a commander elects to take, for integrated component workforces removal of an ART will impact overall manning, which will also affect morale. When manning is lost, the workload does not lessen. Usually, the opposite happens and more duties and responsibilities will fall to the Airmen within the unit. This in turn could lead to mission delays, safety mishaps, and low morale.

When comparing both the ART and AGR removal process, it appears the AGR process is better suited for today's AF, as the time it takes to remove an individual is more expedient which is more advantageous to commanders. Additionally, the process to fill a vacant AGR position is also more feasible for a high operations tempo and joint environment. As mentioned previously, the time it takes to hire into an AGR position is significantly less than hiring into an ART position. As illustrated, the AGR processing being more streamlined, straight forward, expedient, and efficient for commanders. Commanders are able to quickly advertise and hire

³⁶ House of Representatives, 110th Congress. 2008. "Title 5-Government Organization and Employees." Washington: US Government Printing Office, March. 598.

³⁷ Grundmann, Susan T. 2011. "U.S. Merit System Protection Board." *Office of Personnel Management Web site*. April 21.

into positions, which is a beneficial to for today's AF leaders managing and operating in a mixed component environment. Unlike the AGR process, the process to hire ARTs is not an expedient venture, and positions have the potential of sitting vacant for six months to a year, or longer. Prolonged vacancies negatively impact various aspects of a unit to include mission readiness, mission execution, morale, and the budget.

Pay and Benefits

Another area where ARTs greatly differ from the AD is with pay and benefits. Since ARTs are federal civilian employees, they are paid based on the number of hours worked. Most administrative ARTs are required to work eight-hour days, with an hour lunch break. Some ARTs are allowed time to work out during these eight hours; however, this must be approved by the commander, who must coordinate with the CPS. When absent from work, ARTs must either be on leave, or have prior approval from the commander and CPS to telework. Rules and laws govern the civilian workforce prohibit commanders or supervisors from authorizing ARTs a day off without taking leave, day passes, or release them from work any earlier than 59 minutes from the end of the scheduled duty day. While civilian employees get all federal holidays off, unlike the AD, ARTs are not allowed to take down days, family days, or goal days. Instead, ARTs are authorized to take liberal leave during these days.

AGRs are not restricted in the same manner as ARTs because AGRs do not fall under the same rules and laws. Under Title 10 orders, AGRs are equal in status to AD Airmen and the same rules, laws, and policies apply. This creates equality in how commanders manage their mix component workforce, which in turn allows commanders to be standardized in how they manage, discipline, and treat their Airmen. This equality and standardization alleviates confusion,

resentment, and conflict amongst the Airmen, and leads to a more unified and productive workforce.

In terms of annual salary, ARTs and AGRs earn roughly the same when comparing their basic pay. A GS-09 (step 3) ART will earn \$45,225 annually.³⁸ A Master Sergeant (with 10 years in service) AGR will earn \$45,547 annually.³⁹ While they seem close in earnings, there are factors that influence the overall price tag for each program. If overtime or compensatory time were included in the annual earnings, the pay for ARTs would increase. If an ART works past his or her eight-hour workday, he or she is considered in an overtime status. Overtime pay, covered under USC Title 5, is pay for hours worked officially ordered or approved in excess of eight hours per day.⁴⁰ If overtime pay is not desired, ARTs are allowed to request compensatory time off, which is an alternative form of payment for overtime worked. The overtime hourly rate is the ART's hourly rate of basic pay multiplied by 1.5.⁴¹ While the ARTs are able to earn more for overtime or compensatory time, this does not mean it costs the government more to employ an ART versus an AGR. AGRs are receiving benefits that ARTs are not, and if BAH, BAS, incentive pay or bonuses were included in the annual earnings, the price tag to employ an AGR is more costly to the AFR. Ultimately, is it more cost effective to employ ARTs as the AFR full-time workforce, especially when factoring in retirement pay.

Retirements

Retirements for ARTs and AGRs differ when comparing eligibility, benefits, the date when members will receive retirement pay, and the amount received. It is important to highlight these differences to illustrate what AD versus the AFR full-time workforce will receive at the

³⁸ Office of Personnel Management, (OPM). 2016. *Pay and Leave, Salary and Wages*. January 27.

³⁹ Defense Finance and Accounting Service, (DFAS). 2016. *2015 Military Pay Chart Table*. January 27.

⁴⁰ Office of Personnel Management, (OPM). 2015. *General Schedule Classification and Pay*. January 27.

⁴¹ Ibid.

end of their military careers. As more AD and AFR units merge manpower to create mix component units, AF leaders need to realize while each component's Airmen are performing the same duties to support the same mission, they are not being treated or receiving the same benefits and pay. Once again, the argument of inequality comes to the forefront. Due to the various reasons for AFR members to retire, this paper will only address voluntarily retirement.

Since ARTs are dual-status, they can earn retirement in two ways: from Civil Service and from the military. ARTs receive service creditable for AF civilian retirement while serving in a civilian status. When serving in a military status, they will also earn retirement points which serve as creditable service towards a military retirement.⁴² The amount of contribution made throughout an ARTs time in the service, will determine how much they earn in retirement. The Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS) is a three-tiered program which provides for Social Security benefits, a Basic Benefit Plan, and a Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).

In order for ARTs to voluntarily retire, they must meet the civilian age and service requirements, as well as the military requirements. An employee is eligible to retire with an unreduced annuity at age 62, but must have at least five years of service, at age 60 with 20 years of service, or at the minimum retirement age (55-57 years) with 30 years of service.⁴³ On the military side, they must have at least 20 years of creditable years to qualify for a Reserve retirement. Military retirement benefits and pay normally do not start until the retiree has reached the age of 60; however there are exceptions to this rule and the retirement age can be reduced to age 50. Regardless, when the member eventually reaches the civil service retirement

⁴² Air Force Instruction (AFI), 36-2131. 2012. "Air Reserve Technician (ART) Program." Vol. I. United States Air Force, March 20. 9.

⁴³ Air Force Personnel Center, (AFPC). 2015. "General Information for Air Reserve Technician (ART) Positions." *afciviliancareers.com*. January 27.

age, the retiree will most likely receive both civilian and military retired pay and benefits.⁴⁴ This differs from an AGR retirement, as those who retire from active duty will immediately receive military retirement benefits and pay.

Under USC Title 10, AGRs are eligible to retire on their mandatory separation date (MSD) if they have 20 years of total active federal military service (TAFMS). For officers, they must also have 10 years of total active federal commissioned service in order to receive active duty retirement.⁴⁵ Once an AGR member reaches 20 years of TAFMS, and for officers 10 years of Total Active Federal Commissioned Service (TAFCS), they can voluntarily retire from the military and will receive retirement benefits immediately following their retirement date.⁴⁶

There are no differences between an AD and AGR Airmen's retirement as they are both retiring from AD under Title 10 USC. The benefits, pay, and timeline to receive these benefits are same. This equality keeps the mixed component Airmen on a level playing field, meaning all military members will receive the same benefits for the same duties and/or service performed. As the AF continues to integrate more AD and AFR components together to form mixed units, maintaining equality amongst the Airmen will deter resentment, angst, and morale issues amongst the Airmen. Ultimately, the ART retirement system benefits the AF as the cost associated with it is less than with AGR retirements.

⁴⁴ Air Force Instruction (AFI), 36-2131. 2012. "Air Reserve Technician (ART) Program." Vol. I. United States Air Force, March 20. 11.

⁴⁵ Air Force Instruction (AFI), 36-3203. 2015. "Service Retirements." United States Air Force, September 18. 12.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Mission Impact

Manning and Morale

Manning shortfalls have a tendency to negatively impact an organization's health, morale, budget, and readiness. In a January 2015 article, former Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel stated he was worried about low morale in today's military, citing budget cuts, lack of training, manning cuts, and cuts to military members' pay and benefits as the reason.⁴⁷ Extended manning shortfalls leads to overworked and stressed Airmen, which can potentially lead to various issues mentioned previously. All of these compounding issues contribute to retention problems, which is a costly indicator of low morale. The negative effect of employees separating or retiring is disconcerting because of the tremendous impact it has on productivity levels. More importantly, when employees leave, he or she take with them the knowledge, skills and ability that helped contribute to the goals, health, and performance of an organization.⁴⁸ When qualified and mission ready Airmen depart a unit, the unit's overall manning accountability and readiness levels decrease. This decrease affects the unit's status of resources and training, and causes it to fall below executable levels. This significantly hinders the commander and base's ability to deploy mission ready teams or Airmen that are tasked to support world-wide contingency operations.

From 2014 to 2016, the 301st Force Support Squadron located at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base, Carswell Airfield had four vacant ART positions. These positions had been advertised on multiple occasions, but never filled. One position had been vacant for over a year,

⁴⁷ Tilghaman, Andrew. 2015. "Hagel Worries About Morale in Today's Force." *Military Times Web site*. January 23.

⁴⁸ Ali, Vikki. 2015. "The High Cost of Low Morale-And What to do About It." *Zenfits Web site*. February 26.

while the other three were vacant for approximately six to eleven months.⁴⁹ With an increased workload from the vacant positions, the commander elected to put two TRs on orders to help diminish backlogs, accomplish annual readiness training, and execute mission requirements. Unfortunately, orders were eventually cancelled as the budget could not support the requested days. Additionally, after a year of dealing with the increased work and duties, the stress of the situation and constant morale issues contributed to three additional ARTs voluntarily leaving the unit. According to Superintendent, two ARTs were hired into AGR positions and the other ART retired from the military.⁵⁰ While there are various reasons for the departure of these ARTs, the fact that two perused and were hired into AGRs positions is ironic. “It’s not surprising they took these jobs as the pay and benefits are better, they will be in a full-time military status, plus there is a sense of job security and stability associated with an AGR position.”⁵¹

Budget Constraints

The budget is another area of concern for commanders and Airmen operating in a mixed component workforce. Over the past several years, the AF has been faced with budget instability, as there have been budget cuts, manning cuts, government shutdowns, sequestration and furloughs. As the United States government continues to struggle, the affect it has on the Armed Services civilian workforce causes a ripple effect throughout AD and AFR units, groups and wings. Since ARTs work the majority of the time in a civilian status, sequestration and furloughs significantly impact them, the unit, and the mission. They are placed in a temporary non-duty, non-pay status which means they are not allowed to work, may or may not receive pay

⁴⁹ Vargas, Graciela M., interview by Kristi R. Contardo. 2016. *301st Force Support Squadron Manpower Issues* (January 31).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Vargas, Graciela M., interview by Kristi R. Contardo. 2016. *301st Force Support Squadron Manpower Issues* (January 31).

(determined by Congress), must cancel all training, must cancel leave, and they are not allowed to perform military duty.⁵² This type of action is not only problematic for an ART, but for an integrated AD and AFR component workforce. When the civilian manpower is not allowed to work, the workload for those left behind increases. As mentioned previously, an increased workload leads to a more stressful work environment, mission delays, and low morale. Additionally, the ARTs could also experience stress and low morale due potential financial strains, backlog of work, and uncertainty of when they will return to work. While government shutdowns or furloughs have not historically been frequent, over the last few years it has become an opted way to save money, which means the risk of these actions occurring in the future is quite probable.

AGRs can also be affected by government shutdowns, sequestration, or furloughs, but not in the same way as ARTs. Since AGRs are serving on extended active duty orders, they are still required to work during shutdowns, sequestration and furloughs. Just like the AD, AGRs must continue performing their assigned duties, accomplishing training, and executing the mission. Unfortunately, both AD and AGR Airmen might not receive pay until the shutdown is over, or until Congress provides funding.⁵³ While they will receive back payment for days worked, the possibility of not receiving a steady paycheck could absolutely cause them stress, anxiety, and morale issues. The one advantage to having an AD and AGR integrated workforce is the work and mission will continue regardless of funding. By having the AGRs versus ARTs, commanders and Airmen in a mixed component AD and AFR environment will minimize an increase of additional duties, backlogs, or mission delays.

⁵² Office of Personnel Management, (OPM). 2013. *Guidance for Shutdown Furloughs*. October 11. 1-18.

⁵³ Tilghman, Andrew. 2015. "DoD warns troops of possible government shutdown." Military Times Web site. September 25.

For the last few years, the AFR has seen a slow but steady decrease in the budget. In FY14 the annual budget for the AFR \$5.0B, then dropped to \$4.8B the next year. In FY16 the budget was even less at \$4.7B. As the budget has fallen, the AFR has been forced to find ways to stretch the dollar. When faced with finding an efficient way to operate a full-time AFR workforce, the ART program is the logical choice. Financially, it makes more sense to employ ARTs over AGRs. While both programs offer the same quality and caliber employee, who are experts in their field, qualified, professional, and dedicated to accomplishing the mission, one program is far less expensive. Previously discussed, basic pay for an ART and AGR are very close; however when included the benefits associated with the AGRs, the cost of employment surpasses that of an ART. Strictly examining the monetary value, the ART program is the most cost effective for the AFR. Nevertheless, the biggest limiting factor with the ART program and budget constraints is the fact that shutdowns, sequestrations, or furloughs creates manning shortfalls, backlogs, and mission delays, which is why the benefits of employing AGRs is more advantageous to a TF integrated environment.

Results of Comparison

Advantages and Disadvantages

Both the ART and AGR programs have their advantages and disadvantages. Some of the more prevalent benefits each program offers are personnel who are experienced, trained, knowledgeable Airmen that are capable, willing, and dedicated to accomplishing the mission. Each program provides employees with opportunities to progress in rank or grade, further professional training and education, receive awards and decorations for performance, and a multitude of benefits throughout their career and when they retire. For the AGR program, commanders and Airmen in a mixed component structure will see virtually no difference in how

the AGRs are managed, governed, paid, and disciplined when compared to AD Airmen. AGRs are Reservist serving on extended active duty orders, meaning they are equal to their AD counterparts. They are ruled by the same laws and policies as AD, they must adhere to the same standards and instructions, and commanders can administer disciplinary actions the same as they would AD military members. With AGRs, there is no risk of sequestration or furloughs, no confusion about status or rank, no additional costs for requiring AGRs to work past an eight hour day, and the hiring and/or removal process is more streamlined, expedient and efficient. AGRs are readily available when the mission dictates, able to fly, maintain, manage, and perform support functions 24/7. The only disadvantage that clearly stands out with employing AGRs is the cost associated with the program. Since the AGRs are essentially receiving equal pay and benefits as AD, the cost to employ and potentially retire an AGR Airman will cost the AFR more than compared to an ART. However, even though the AGRs are receiving more in the way of benefits, the actual base pay between AGRs and ARTs, who are equivalent in rank, is very similar. Ultimately, the price of employing and retiring AGRs puts this program at a disadvantage when compared to the ART program.

Cost Effective

Since ARTs are not receiving the same military benefits, pay, or immediate retirement pay like AGRs, the ART program is more cost effective for the AFR. While the cost savings is an advantage, there are many disadvantages that cause this program to be less than optimal for today's high operations tempo and mixed component workforce. ARTs work mainly in a civilian status which means they cannot be held to the same rules, policies, laws, and administrative actions as AD or AGR Airmen. Commanders are limited in how they utilize their ART manpower, especially if facing manning shortfalls, as they are not authorized to impose

significant additional duties or responsibilities on an ART unless vetted and approved by CPS or APFC. Since every federal civilian employee is hired off of a PD, this PD must be followed and cannot be changed or duties added to it, unless approved by AFPC. Additionally, if an ART is not performing up to standards, and administrative actions must be taken, the commander is once again restricted on what corrective actions they may take as civilian employees are governed by different laws, rules, and regulations than military members. These restrictions and limitations can confuse commanders and Airmen working in an integrated AD and AFR workforce, especially when ARTs are required to wear the military uniform in civilian status. Another disadvantage to the ART program is the timelines associated with hiring and/or removal of an ART. As described previously, the process is straightforward; however the extensive steps and time it takes to actually remove an ART is long, drawn out, and burdensome for commanders.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Over the past two decades, the AFR and ANG support role to the nation has drastically changed from a component that backfilled active military, to a now more integrated and essential player in today's military operations. More missions are being handled by the AFR and ANG, more manpower is being deployed to support contingency operations, and more AD and reserve components are merging together to accomplish the nations objectives and goals. As the AF moves forward with integrating AF and AFR components, it is fundamental to identify which AFR full-time workforce is the best suited to meet the needs, timelines, and requirements of a demanding high operations tempo environment. As with all programs, there are advantages and disadvantages associated with ARTs and AGRs; however, it is evident that one program limits and restricts commanders and Airmen when operating and managing a mixed component workforce. This research illustrates the challenges commanders and Airmen may face with the

ART and AGR programs, which is based on the difference in the status of ARTs versus AGRs. As a result, the best suited program for today's Total Force construct is to use the AGR program when integrating AD and AFR components. Since AGRs are Reservists serving on extended active duty orders, they are managed, disciplined, paid, and ultimately treated like their AD counterparts. There is more stability and reliability with AGRs when faced with budget constraints, government shutdowns, and furlough, and the ability to quickly fill a vacant AGR position is more advantageous to commanders.

It is this paper's recommendation to use AGRs when merging AD and AFR Airmen to form mixed component units or sections. This paper is not recommending or suggesting the AFR do away with the ART program, as ARTs are currently an optimal full-time workforce structure for AFR units that are not integrated. The proposed way ahead should be for the AF and AFR to conduct manpower studies to determine the right level of manning for integrated component units. The likelihood of manning to decrease will result in fewer positions for AFR full-time workforce, which results in cost savings. With these projected cost savings, the AFR could use the money to replace ART positions and fund AGR positions. In the end, ARTs and AGRs base pay are very similar so the AFR would still save money because they are paying for fewer personnel. The only downside to this recommendation is the cost associated to the benefits AGRs receive while on orders, and if they retire from an active duty status. However, considering the many advantages this program offers to commanders and Airmen working in an integrated component environment, the cost should not be the deterring factor. This is why the AFR must re-evaluate the benefits associated with the AGR program and strongly consider incorporating more AGRs, and less ARTs, into mixed component squadrons, sites, and workforces.

Glossary of Terms

AD - Active Duty

AF - Air Force

AFGE - American Federation of Government Employees

AFPC - Air Force Personnel Center

AFPD - Air Force Policy Directive

AFPERS - Air Force Personnel System

AFR/C - Air Force Reserve/Command

AGR - Active Guard and Reserve

ANG - Air National Guard

ARPC - Air Reserve Personnel Center

ART - Air Reserve Technician

BAH - Basic Allowance for Housing

BAS - Basic Allowance Substantives

CPS - Civilian Personnel Section

CSAF - Chief of Staff of the Air Force

DODI - Department of Defense Instruction

FECA - Federal Employees Compensation Act

FEGLI - Federal Employees Group Life Insurance

FEHB - Federal Employees Health Benefits

FERS - Federal Employees Retirement System

FSS - Force Support Squadron

FY - Fiscal Year

IMP-I - Integrated Personnel Management Initiative

MPS - Military Personnel Section

MSD - Mandatory Separation Date

NAF - Numbered Air Force

OPM - Officer of Personnel Management

RMVS - Reserve Management Vacancy System

RPA - Request for Personnel Action

SECAF - Secretary of the Air Force

SGLI - Servicemember's Group Life Insurance

T2T - Total Force Task Force

TAFMS - Total Active Federal Military Service

TAFCS - Total Active Federal Combined Service

TF - Total Force

TFC - Total Force Continuum

TFSS - Total Force Support Site

TR - Traditional Reservist

TSP - Thrift Savings Plan

UCMJ - Uniform Code of Military Justice

USC - United States Code

USERRA - Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994



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